

CONFIDENTIAL  
INFORMATION REPORT

CD NO.

25X1A9a

COUNTRY Lebanon/Syria

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DATE DISTR. 29 Dec 1948

SUBJECT Communists' Efforts to Foment Strikes in Lebanon and Syria

NO. OF PAGES 4

PLACE ACQUIRED

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NO. OF ENCLS.  
(LISTED BELOW)

DATE OF INFO

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SUPPLEMENT TO  
REPORT NO.

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1. Certain members of the Communist Party in Damascus, namely, Khalid Baghdash, Muhammad 'Ali Nabi, Hashim Amin, Michel Faysal, and Ibrahim Ashqar met in Ratib Qadmani's office on 19 November. Qadmani had visited Isaak Issagulov, Chargé d'Affaires at the Soviet Legation in Damascus, on 18 November. Baghdash spoke at this meeting, and urged that Communist detainees at the Ba'albek camp be asked to continue their hunger strike and that demonstrations and strikes be staged in Syria and Lebanon. He emphasized that these strikes should be effective enough to paralyze public activity in both countries.
  2. Baghdash said that he had discussed the proposed strikes with leaders of the Communist Party and of the labor unions and that they had supported the plan. He stated that most of the shoemakers, tram motormen and conductors, typesetters, and drivers were ready to strike against:

- a. The internment of Lebanese and Syrian citizens in concentration camps;
- b. The anti-Communist pressure inspired by the Anglo-Saxons; and
- c. The "conspiracies" planned by the local governments against the Syrian and Lebanese peoples to bring them under British domination.

It was decided that Baghdash, Hashim Amin and Michel Faysal would go to Lebanon to arrange for the workers in Tripoli, Sidon, and Zahle to strike simultaneously.

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NO CHANGE in Class.

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Auth: NSA MEM. 7/7/1963

Date: 1 MAY 1972 By: ou

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3. For some time Communists had tried to foment a strike among employees of the Iraq Petroleum Company, source claims. On 17 November, after the Company had decided to advance money to the workers to defray the cost of their transfer from Beirut to Tripoli, to be refunded in installments by the workers, Communists started agitation for a demand for transportation expenses and adequate living quarters to be provided by the Company. Although at first the majority of the workers had accepted the Company's offer, many were swayed by the arguments of Communists and, at a meeting held by the workers to discuss the matter, Communist speakers, by the organization of clagues, were able to arouse enthusiasm for their demands.
4. Toward the end of November, a leaflet was published by the anti-Communist trade union association, Jami'at al-'Ummal, which stated that Mustafa 'Aris' labor pamphlet, Hayat al-'Ummal, had made untrue allegations regarding a meeting of IPC workers. 25X1A6a  
Comment.  
 Possibly this refers to the meeting mentioned above.) This leaflet defended the anti-Communist speaker, a certain Bushi, who, it said, truly represented the workers, and it stated that the Communist speaker had been howled down at the meeting. The leaflet also accused Mustafa 'Aris of serving foreign interests, and stated that the chief of the Jami'at al-'Ummal, Muhammad Wahbi Misri, had been able to stop the strike and to reconcile the Company and the workers.
5. Nicola Khayr, Chief of the Social Affairs Department of the Ministry of National Economy, stated that on 15 November Mustafa 'Aris asked him to issue the license that he had requested a year ago, to his Federation of Unions (Ittihad Niqabat al-'Ummal). He reproached the government for dividing the workers and aiding their exploitation by employers through its creation of the rival Workers' League (Jami'at Niqabat al-'Ummal wa-l-Mustakhdamin), and he threatened a strike if the license was not issued to his Federation.
6. Khayr told 'Aris that his request had been referred to the Surete Generale and the Ministry of National Economy for approval, but that no reply had been received. As for the proposed strike, Khayr said that, if 'Aris' typesetters had any demands to make, he would examine them. However, if the workers did strike to create disorder or for political reasons, Khayr warned 'Aris that severe measures would be taken against them; employers would be granted permission to dismiss the strikers without compensation, and the latter would be pursued by the Surete Generale, according to law. 'Aris said that he would study the matter, as he did not want to violate any law.
7. The Typesetters' Union, headed by Sa'd-al-Din Muminah, held a meeting on 21 November, following the arrests of 'Aris and of Nasib Nim', Telegraph editor, who had been ordered by the Communist Party to lead the demonstration in front of the UNESCO building. Invitations to this meeting had been extended on 20 November to all Communist and non-Communist workers, but the latter did not accept. The non-Communists were also asked to participate in the proposed strike.

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8. At the meeting, it was decided to proclaim a general strike to protest the arrest of 'Aris and his comrades, and to demand the release of the Ba'albek detainees, including Hanna Zarqa, Secretary of the Typesetters' Union.
9. Proclamation of the strike greatly disturbed the Jami'at al-'Ummal, Government-sponsored trade union association, and, following a meeting between Tawfiq Faghali and Khalil Khuri, son of the Lebanese President, Bisharah Khuri, the President instructed the Ministry of National Economy to issue a license to the non-Communist Typesetters' and Bookbinders' Union. This license was issued on 18 November, under Decree No. 9407.
10. On 19 and 20 November, Tawfiq Faghali urged all workers to join the Jami'at al-'Ummal for their own interests and those of the country, and to frustrate the proposed strike of the Communist-controlled Typesetters' Union. When the workers learned that the Typesetters' and Bookbinders' Union had been granted a license and was obviously backed by the government, the majority expressed willingness to join Faghali's union.
11. As soon as the Typesetters' Union had issued its proclamation to strike, the Typesetters' and Bookbinders' Union also issued one, denouncing the strike as a foreign-inspired move to help 'Aris, which would bring no advantages to the workers.
12. Faghali then contacted Khalil Khuri and promised to provide workers for each newspaper whose typesetters might strike. He informed Khuri that al-'Amal, al-Saman, al-Bayraq, al-Hadith, and Telegraph (where Faghali's brother works as a typesetter) would print their issues. Faghali then called on all the publishers and promised to help them print their newspapers if their workers struck.
13. During the reception that the government held on 21 November at the Grand Serail to celebrate Lebanon's independence, Sheikh Khalil Khuri and Habib Nahhas, Chief of the Press Bureau of the Presidency, were interviewed by newsmen concerning the strike. Khuri told them that the newspapers would be provided with workers in case of a strike.
14. Faghali's workers were sent to help print Beirut (in compliance with 'Abdullah Mashnuq's request) as well as to al-Nahar and other newspapers. Source states that, strangely enough, Telegraph was printed on the al-'Amal printing press by Faghali's workers when some of Nasib al-Matni's Communist workers threw the types of Telegraph on the floor, in order to stop the paper's issue. 25X1A6a  
Comment.  
 Nasib Matni, publisher of Telegraph, has been reported as a member of the Communist Party and as a Soviet propagandist. 25X1X6

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15. On 22 November, Nasib Matni asked the Publishers' Union to hold a meeting to discuss the typesetters' strike. The Union met on 22 November at the offices of Iskander Riyashi, and under his chairmanship. The Publishers' Union was ready to support the strike after Riyashi's defense of the workers, but Elias Rababi, chief editor of al-'Amal and member of the Publishers' Union Council, acted to prevent this. Rababi said that the Typesetters' Union should have consulted the Publishers' Union before deciding on the strike. Furthermore, he said, the strike was being called, not to demand workers' rights or to protest arbitrary imprisonment, but for the sake of 'Aris, who was not a typesetter, and of demonstrators who had done harm to Lebanon. Furthermore, he said, some of the workers belonging to another Typesetters' union opposed the strike. Rababi recommended that the strike be delayed and the government approached about the release of the detainees. He thus influenced the publishers and workers to call off the strike.

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16. Therefore, as most of the workers opposed the strike, the Communists had to abandon it, certain of its failure. Accordingly, a proclamation calling off the strike was issued by the Beirut District Committee of the Communist Party.

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